

December 19th, 2002

Important Questions Concerning the Administration's Smallpox Vaccine Proposals

(This letter was sent by Congressman Ron Paul to Tommy Thompson, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, in response to announcements that the administration plans mandatory smallpox vaccines for approximately one million soldiers and frontline medical providers)

Dear Secretary Thompson:

Please provide answers to the following questions regarding the administration's smallpox vaccination policy:

1. Does the administration believe it has the legal authority to institute a mandatory vaccine program for any group of Americans?
2. If the answer to question one is yes, would the administration consider implementing a mandatory vaccine program for first responders, if the current voluntary program does not produce what the administration considers a sufficient number of vaccinated first responders to handle a smallpox emergency?
3. Are those who voluntarily receive the smallpox vaccine eligible for compensation from the National Vaccine Compensation Fund?
4. Are individuals who are injured by inadvertent exposure to the smallpox vaccine because of contact with a vaccinated person eligible for compensation from the National Vaccine Compensation Fund?

5. Have any states made plans to mandate smallpox vaccines as part of their bioterrorism defense plan?

6. Does the administration support the provisions in the Model Emergency Health Powers Act, which were drafted with the assistance of the Center for Disease Control, which appear to grant individual governors the ability to implement a mandatory smallpox vaccine program?

7. If the answer to questions 5 or 6 is yes, how will the administration support and/or assist a governor who has decided to implement a mandatory smallpox vaccination plan?